

Arboretum News

Fall 1998

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50 Years of Plants and People - California Arboretum Foundation 1948-1998

A corrupt pre-war Los Angeles was the backdrop for many of Raymond Chandler's "noir" genre novels. World-weary private detective Philip Marlowe shuttled between various Southland locales as murder and mayhem played out in Chandler's inventive prose. The backdrops for these stories ran the gamut from palatial estates to run-down bungalows. What was the landscaping like back then?

Reviews of some of Chandler's works show that in *Farewell My Lovely*, Marlowe is trying to help Moose Malloy, a bank robber just released from prison, find his missing girlfriend. Marlowe pulls up to a "dried-out brown house with a dried-out brown lawn in front of it." The narration continues: "There was a large bare patch around a tough looking palm tree." What kind of lawn was Marlowe looking at? According to *The Garden Beautiful in California*, a garden manual published by the Los Angeles Times in 1940, Kentucky Bluegrass (*Poa pratensis*) was the most widely used grass in Los Angeles. Later on hybrid bermudas, dichondra, and finally dwarf tall fescues, would predominate in L.A. lawns. Bluegrass would be an especially good candidate for a dry summer lawn because unless it is regularly watered its shallow root system causes it to dry out rapidly. Wild bermuda, considered a weed then and now, is another possibility, although it turns more yellow than brown when it goes dormant from lack of water. The "tough looking palm tree" is probably *Phoenix canariensis*, a stout, well-armed palm popular in Los Angeles since the turn of the century.

The Big Sleep, which was made into a popular movie of the same name starring Humphrey Bogart and Lauren Bacall, may



"GARDENS OF THE SILVER SCREEN" THE LOS ANGELES GARDEN SHOW -PLANT NOIR-

Frank McDonough,
Botanical Information Consultant,
The Arboretum of Los Angeles County

be considered one of Chandler's best novels. In the beginning of the book Marlowe (played in the movie by Bogart) is summoned to the residence of millionaire General Sternwood. After a flirtatious encounter with Sternwood's hopped-

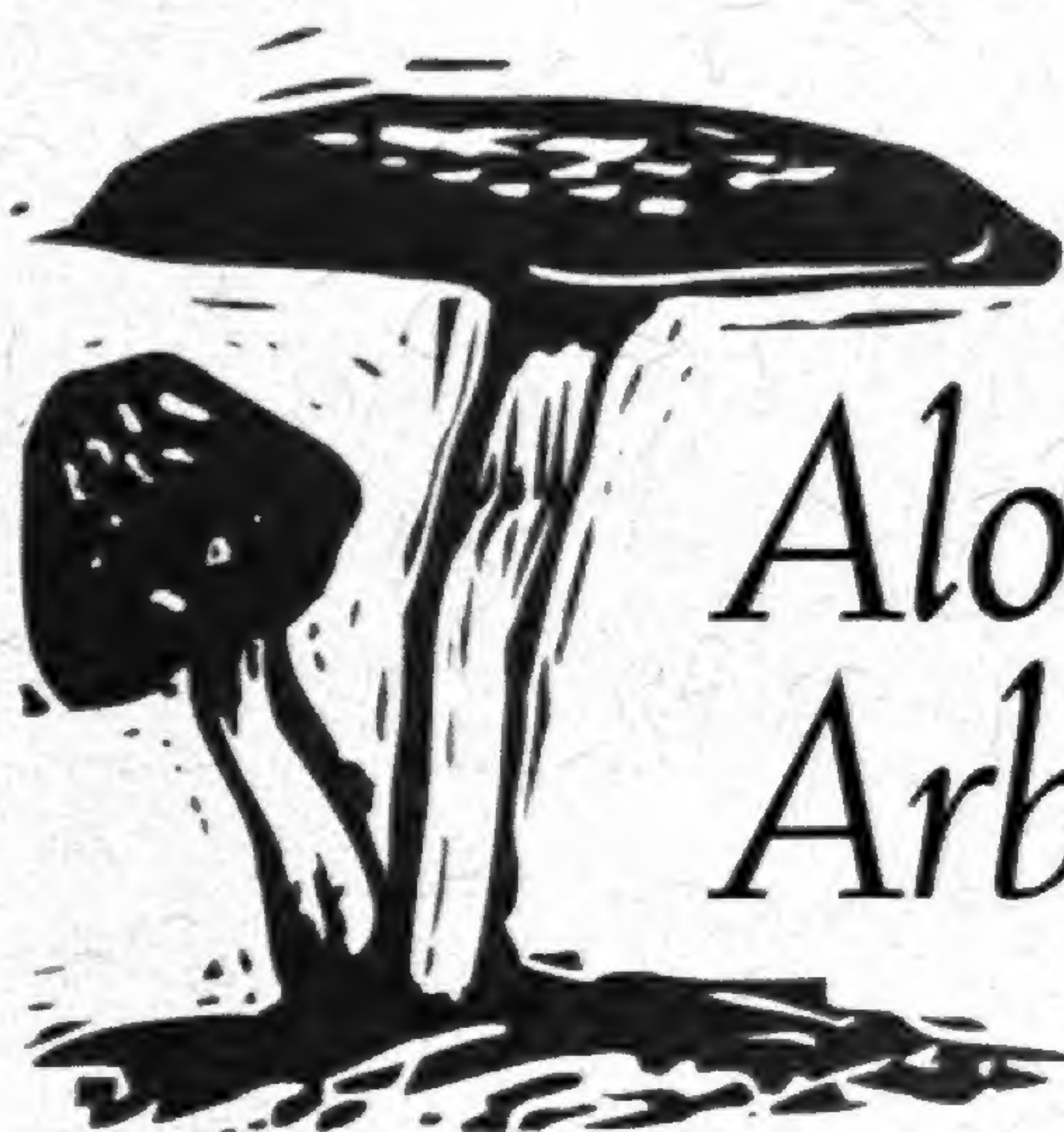
up daughter, the detective is led through a huge greenhouse for a meeting with the wheelchair-bound Sternwood.

Chandler describes the greenhouse: "The plants filled the place, a forest of them, with nasty meaty leaves and stalks like the newly washed fingers of dead men...after a while he (Marlowe) came to a clearing in the middle of the jungle under a domed roof". In the course of the meeting General Sternwood asks Marlowe if he likes orchids, to which Marlowe responds, "not particularly." Sternwood then comments "they are nasty things. Their flesh is too much like the flesh of men. And their perfume has the rotten sweetness of a prostitute."

The inspiration for Sternwood was probably Edward Laurence Doheny (1856-1935), a Los Angeles oil magnate who made his fortune when he discovered oil in what is now downtown L.A.. Doheny's mansion near Adams and Figueroa once boasted one of the largest greenhouses on the West Coast. This conservatory, measuring 75 by 200 feet and almost three stories high, was also the first greenhouse on the West Coast to be built of steel on a concrete foundation. Doheny kept a collection of cycads and palms there, many collected in Mexico, Cuba and Guatemala by Edward Howard. Railroad carloads of plants arrived regularly from 1907 to 1914.

Although there is apparently no listing of plants available, Doheny surely would have had palms like *Calyptrocalyx*, *Astrocaryum*, Aerial-rooted *Socratea durissima*, various species of *Caryota*, *Pseudophoenix*, *Trithrinax*, *Coccothrinax spisa* and many more.

Continued on back page



Along Arboretum Paths

Compiled by Nelson Holmes, *Along Arboretum Paths*, will take you to a different part of the Garden each issue.

One of the most beautiful and astounding flowering trees of Southern California is now in bloom. The **Silk Floss Tree** can be seen throughout The Arboretum, and is recognized by its large rose-pink flowers, which begin to appear in the landscape at the end of summer. Some of these specimens continue to bloom through the winter. The **Silk Floss Tree** can also be recognized by its bright green trunk which is frequently covered with thick spines. If you keep your eyes on the skyline as you walk through the garden, you see the pink canopies of these magnificent trees in almost every direction. Many of these trees retain the previous year's fruit, which have opened to reveal the fluffy white silk floss that aids in dispersal of the seeds by the wind.

Exiting the tram boarding area, go left on the tram road and continue south, past the Bauer Fountain, to the Mediterranean Section. Plantings here are from countries that surround the

Mediterranean Sea and share a climate very similar to ours in Southern California. The "Mediterranean climate" is defined by cool moist winters, warm dry summers and seasonal rainfall between 10

and 20 inches per year. This climate is also found on the southern tip of Africa, parts of southern and western Australia and the central coast of Chile, South America. In this section you find plants well adapted to hot, dry summers, very much like plants in our own chaparral and coastal sage-shrub communities.

Plants of note are: ***Pinus halpensis*, Aleppo Pine**, found growing along the fence line at your left. The Aleppo Pine is the "fir" tree mentioned in the Bible. Also on the left is a shrub growing near the road that bears bright yellow blooms throughout the spring and summer, named ***Hypericum canariensis*, Bush St. John's Wort**. Extracts from the *Hypericum* are used as a natural antidepressant and safe alternative to drugs such as Prozac. The ***Vitex agnus-castus*, Chaste Tree**, can be seen on the left just before the Circle Road intersection. This plant derives its common name from the practice of Mediterranean monks who brewed tea from the tree's fruit to impact their libido negatively. ***Laurus nobilis*, European Bay**, on your right opposite the Chaste Tree, is the tree from which wreaths were woven for the champions of the ancient Olympics.

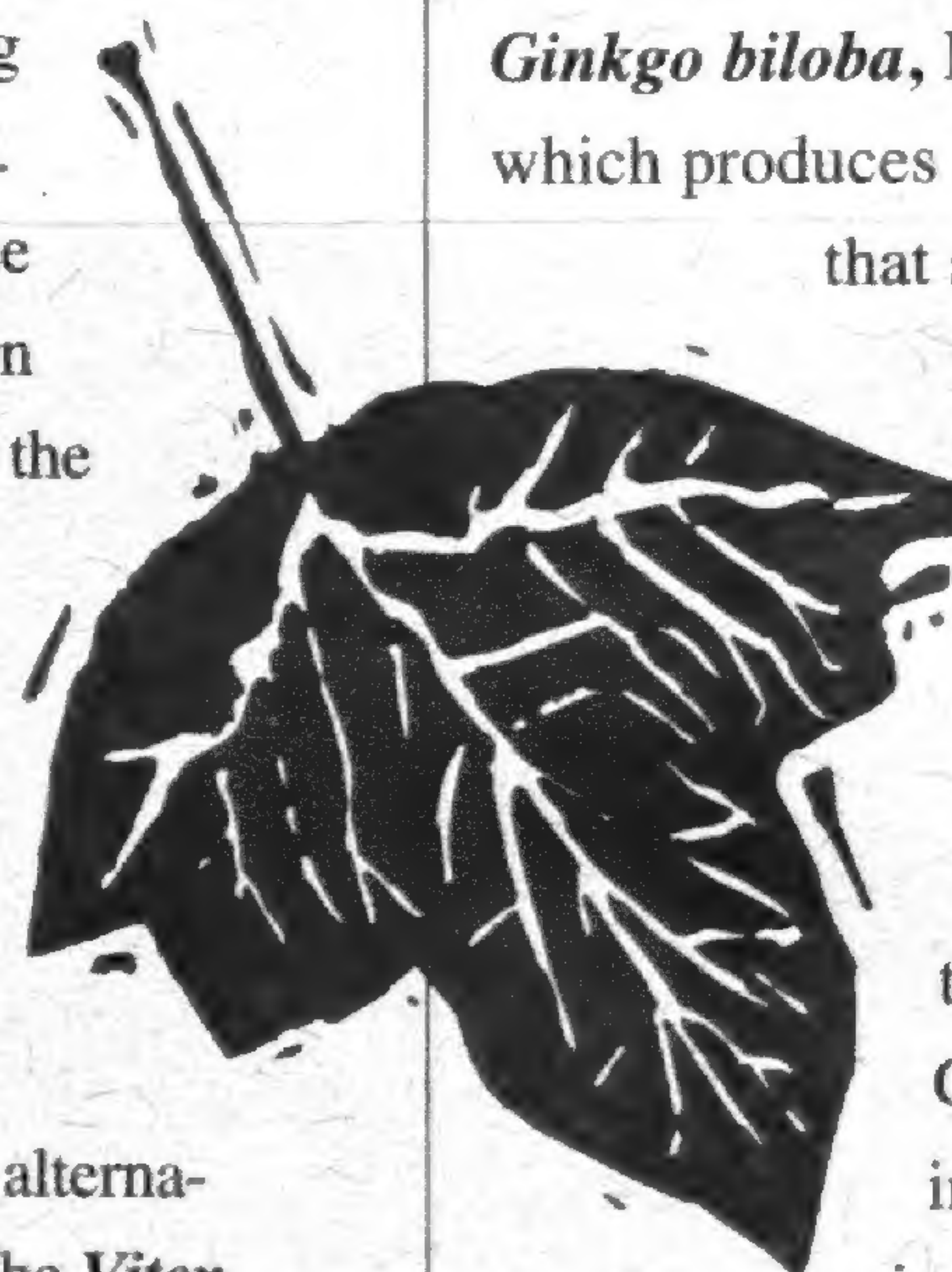
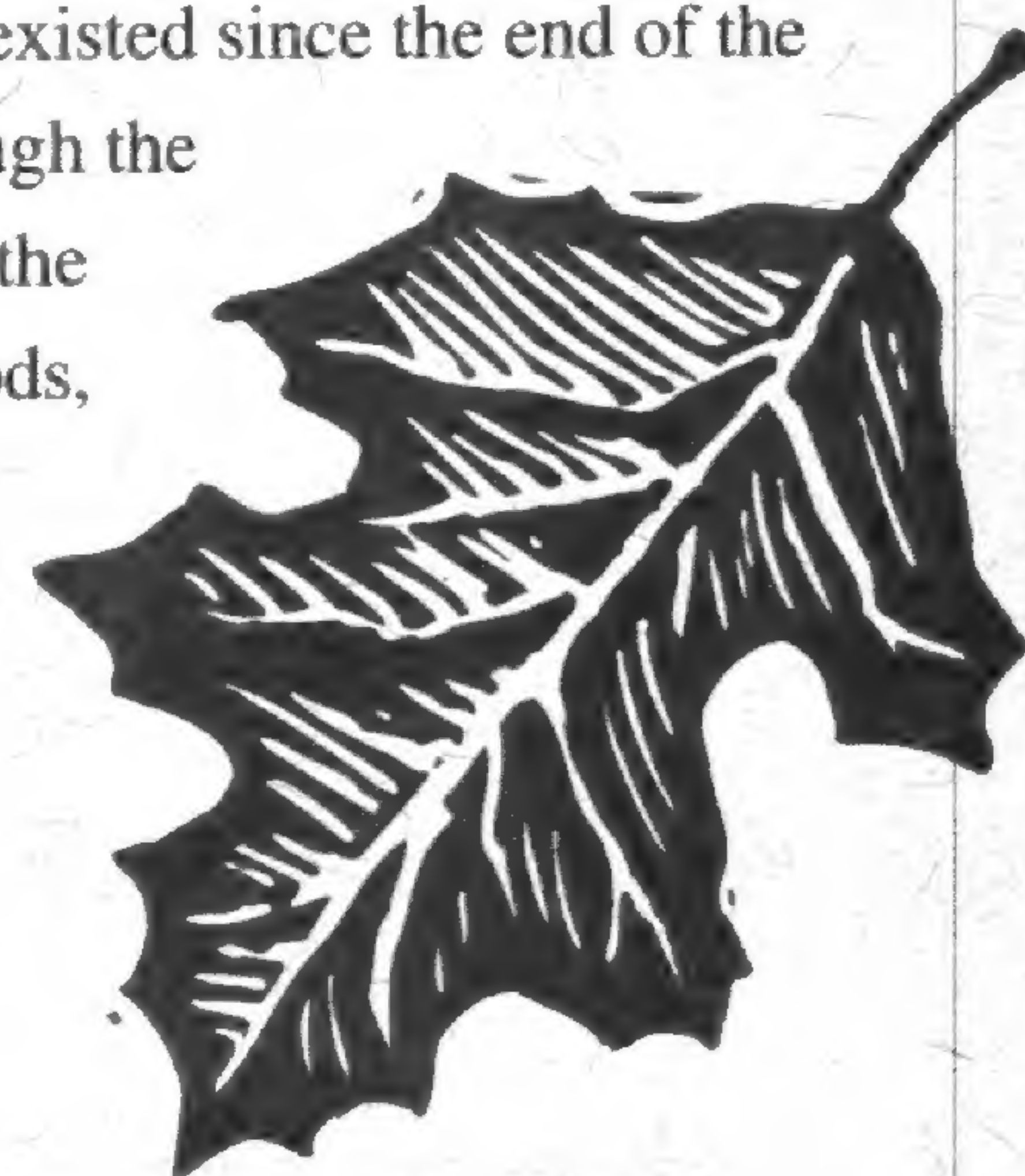
Turn left at the intersection of the Tram and Circle roads. On your right, most of the prominent plants you'll see at the eastern edge of the Tropical Forest

could easily be called "living fossils." Here you observe a collection of **Cycads** that are small, palm-like trees often called "Sago Palms". However, the Cycads are actually related to conifers or cone bearing plants such as pines. These Cycads have, as a species, existed since the end of the Triassic through the beginning of the Jurassic periods, and flourished with the dinosaurs. This area marks the eastern entrance to the Tropical Forest.

Plants to note in this area are: ***Ginkgo biloba*, Maiden Hair Tree**, which produces a delicate, triangular leaf

that suggests the flow of a woman's hair. An extract of this tree is a powerful antioxidant and is marketed as a nutritional supplement and memory aid. Given the proper conditions, Ginkgo leaves turn an incredibly bright yellow in the fall. The Ginkgo is sacred to Buddhists and is

often cultivated on monastery grounds in China and Japan. Near the Circle Road is the tall conifer, ***Metasequoia glyptostroboides*, Dawn Redwood**. Unlike other redwoods, the Dawn Redwood is deciduous; its leaves turn brown in the fall causing speculation that the tree is either ailing or dead. The Dawn Redwood once ranged throughout Asia and North America as indicated by fossil records, but was only recently discovered as a living species in China's Szechwan province in 1941. ♦



A French Grandmere's Garden

by Jan Smithen, a regular contributor to the Arboretum News

The 1952 book, *Regarding the French*, by Moma Clarke says "French women are not gardeners. They like to see a well-kept garden, but they do not care to make one." Well, things have changed a lot since then. French women are becoming very passionate and accomplished gardeners, creating enchanting personal gardens that echo their interests and display their skills. Such a one is that of Mme. Nicole Arboireau on the outskirts of the ancient Roman city, Frejus, in southern France.

You approach the garden down a country lane lined with shrubs and climbing roses. The apricot colored Rambler, 'Alberic Barbier', is in full bloom threading into a rosy pink species, *Rosa indica major*. The classic French rose 'Pierre de Ronsard' climbs over the homemade gate and arch. Mme. Arboireau explains that she herself has put together all the structures in the garden. These are simply made with rustic poles anchored in the ground, then tied to the overhead cross pieces with heavy twine. They are painted a soft blue to match the shutters of her thick walled stone farmhouse. The house itself, is thickly covered with

Parthenocissus quinquefolia.

Deep set windows peer out between these typical provencale shutters. Every sill has a pot of scented pelargonium, a dish of potpourri or a

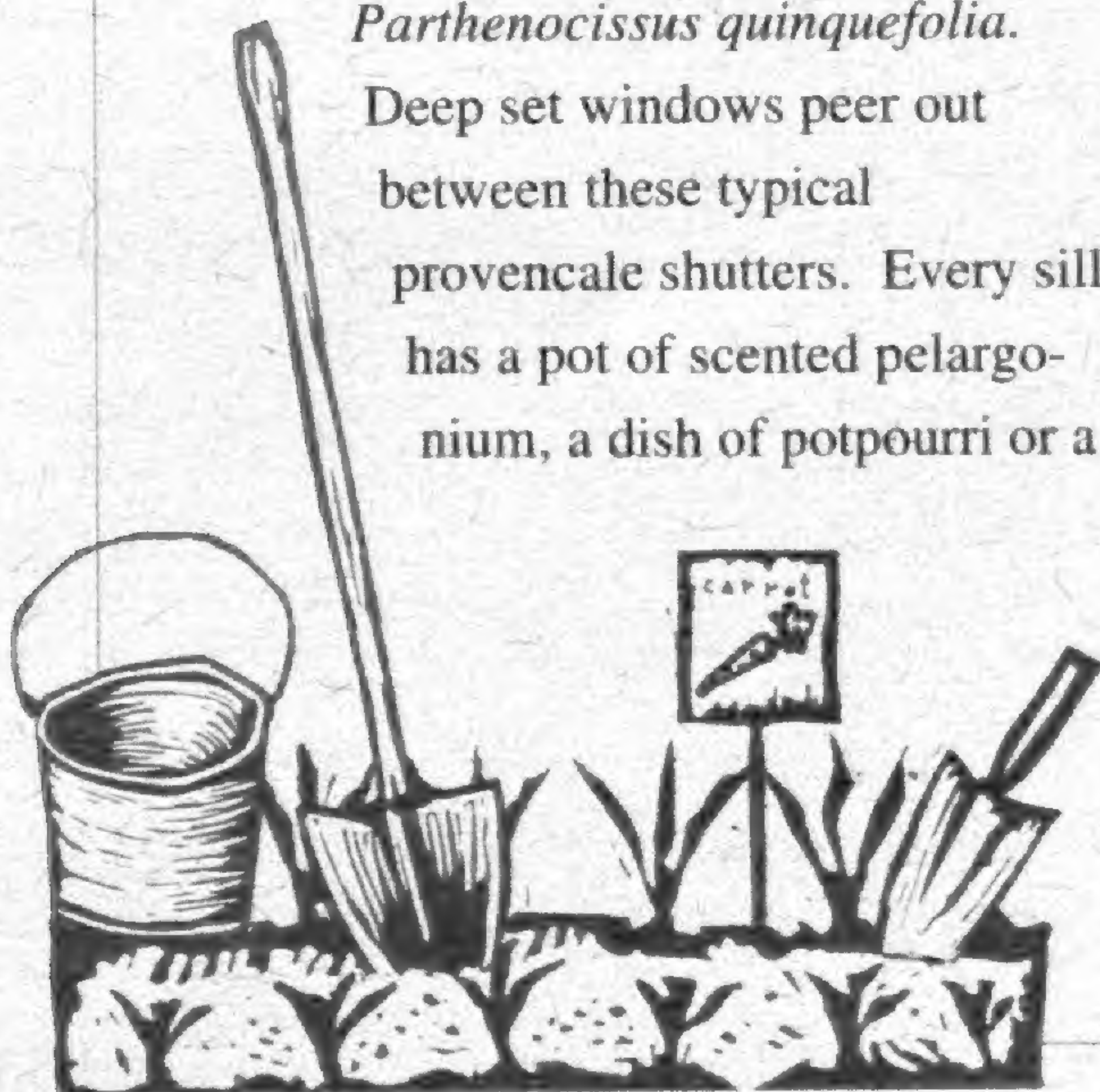
pitcher of fresh flowers in front of a white lace curtain.

Right away you begin to feel the magic of this country garden as you wander the switchback paths that lead down narrow terraces retained with ancient dry rock walls. Walk in and out of shade cast by Cork Oak, Olive, Eucalyptus, and what we call California Pepper. Here is the native shrub, Lentisc, and there a small Umbrella pine. Honey Bush (*Melianthus major*) shades a patch of hellebores. Cistus is in bloom everywhere, but the species look different from the ones we grow. *Eriogeron karvinskianus*, what we call Mexican Daisy, jumps out between the drywall rocks and spills onto paths. *Acanthus spinosus* defines a soft leaf yucca, and a blue leafed rue is laced with yellow canary bird creeper (*Tropaeolum peregrinum*). A row of the native, *Iris pallida*, in full blue bloom, leads to a shaded wicker seat. This is also painted soft blue and surrounded by pots and an old watering can. *Osteospermum barberae* scrambles between chair legs. Marking every step and turn are large terra cotta pots shaped like olive jars or the typical provencale urn, called Anduze. Large mounds of spiked lavender mark the entrance to a low rustic arbor painted blue and covered with roses. Over all tower several Italian cypress, like dark fingers pointing towards heaven. Volunteering everywhere is the annual *Cerithe major* with its curling blue flower bracts. We are only just now discovering that this Mediterranean native can be grown in our own gardens.



The centerpiece of the garden is a small children's playhouse, painted blue, its open windows waving with homemade curtains. Mme. Arboireau explains this is a provincial grandmother's garden. She wishes to inspire her granddaughters and their friends with a love of gardening. She wishes to teach them about the native plants of Provence and the Mediterranean. She teaches the children how these plants were used by the people in the olden days: for food, for medicine, for clothing and household. All, so these children will grow with a knowledge of and connection to, their native land. For me, this is a lesson learned half a world away, about my own native land. ♣

Last May, Jan accompanied the California Arboretum Foundation sponsored tour of the gardens of Provence and the Cote d'Azur. If you are interested in future tours, contact the Foundation office.



THE LOS ANGELES GARDEN SHOW — GARDENS OF — THE SILVER SCREEN GARDENS • FLOWERS LECTURES • MARKET PLACE

Thursday, October 8
through Sunday, October 11
9 a.m. to 7 p.m. daily



GARDEN SHOW FEATURES

Style Gardens for the Home, Condominium and Patio:

Southern California's most outstanding landscape designers, nurseries and growers present award winning gardens and outdoor environments which interpret the Garden Show theme.

The Flower Pavilion: An impressive orchid display and floral exhibits by individuals and groups. Ikebana, the art of Japanese Flower arranging is also featured.

Garden Living: Settings created by Southern California's American Society of Interior Design (ASID) Pasadena Chapter members.

Lectures and Demonstrations: Garden experts and industry professionals provide new insights for beginning and advanced gardeners. Included with admission price.

Children's Garden Playhouses:

One-of-a-kind designs for your home and garden.

Cooking Pavilion: Demonstrations of the latest trends and products in garden related cooking.

The Plant Market: An opportunity to purchase new and exciting plant material from Southern California exhibitors.

Specialty Food Court: A variety of foods and beverages are offered for everyone's dining tastes from seven participating restaurants.

The Bird Garden: Bird Houses specifically designed for the home and garden.

The Market Place: Innovative garden and home related items available for purchase from more than 50 selected exhibitors from around the world.

FLOWER FESTIVAL

Foundation members and their friends are invited to enter one or more exhibits in *The Flower Festival*, a new element of the 1998 Los Angeles Garden Show. Five categories of participation are available:

- Flower arranging
- A single horticulture specimen in bloom and in a container
- A distinctive foliage plant in a container

- A group of plants in a single container
- A single cut stem of a horticultural specimen displayed in a glass carafe.

For *Flower Festival* details and entry form, call (626) 447-8207.

VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

Be a part of the 1998 Los Angeles Garden Show... You are invited to serve as a Garden Show volunteer. Serve as a docent or a hostess, take tickets, sell programs or beverages. There is something for everyone. Make new friends and receive free admission to the Show. For more information call (626) 447-8207.



PREVIEW PARTY

Wednesday, October 7
4 - 8 p.m.

Preview the 1998 Show prior to opening to the public and enjoy gourmet grazing from six local restaurants. Valet Parking is available.

\$50 per person, Reservations Required by calling (626) 447-8207. Watch for your invitation in the mail.

MEMBERSHIP BENEFITS New this year ...

- **Golden Garden, Individual and Garden Members** may purchase TWO discount tickets at \$7.50 (instead of \$10) with proof of valid membership.
- **Sustainer Members** (\$100) receive two complimentary tickets, good for one day.
- **Sponsor Members** (\$250) and **Affiliate Members** (\$500) receive four complimentary tickets, good for one day.
- **Benefactor Members** (\$1,000) receive a run-of-show pass.

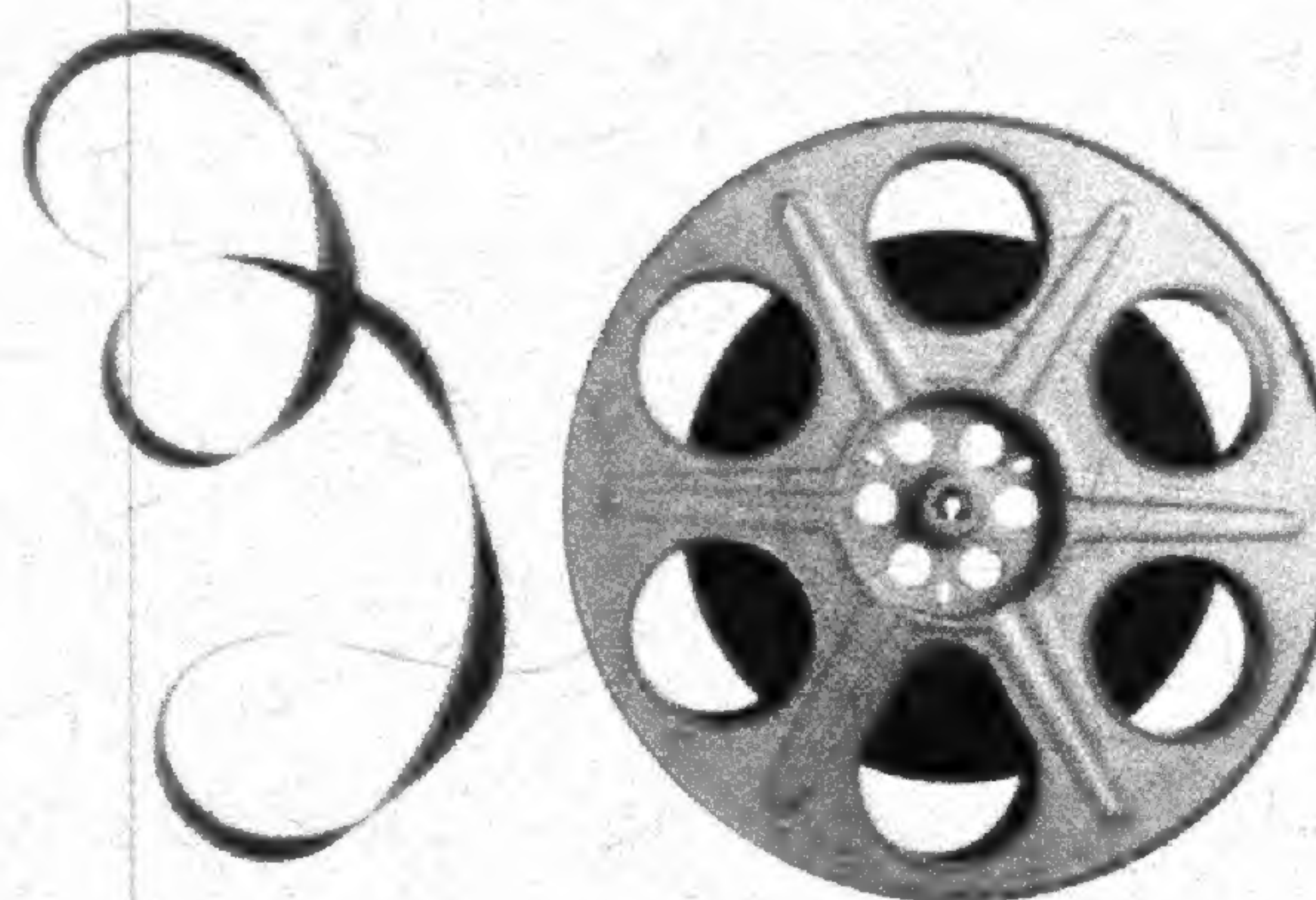
Also ... there is a members only ticket line with a nearby Membership Sales table. Inside the Garden Show itself, a tented Members Only Lounge is available next to the Food Court

MORE INFORMATION

For Garden Show information call the Garden Show Hotline at (626) 294-2059 or visit the web site at www.arboretum.org.



A reminder The Arboretum grounds are closed on October 6 & 7 to prepare for the Garden Show and will be closed on October 12 for clean-up. We apologize for the inconvenience.



Arboretum News Q&A:

Q&A is an occasional column in The Arboretum News featuring Arboretum staff members who give topical information, and provide thought provoking insight into The Arboretum.



JERRY TURNEY,
Biologist

Jerry is a scientific botanical and horticultural researcher who conducts studies related to evaluating new commercial products, and to

maintaining and improving the Arboretum's collections. He is available for consultation in person, by mail or by phone regarding botanical and horticultural topics.

FRANK
MCDONOUGH,
Botanical Information
Consultant

Tuesday through Saturday, Frank is available to answer all plant questions. He also works on special projects ranging from creating signage and workshops to assisting the visitor as well as developing and maintaining The Arboretum collection databases.



KEVIN KANE,
Assistant
Superintendent

Assists in the planning and directing of the development, planting, and maintenance of The Arboretum.



As a new staff member what can you do in your position at The Arboretum to increase visitorship?

JT: I am able to teach classes in various aspects of horticulture such as arboriculture, mycology, and plant pathology which I believe will attract more people to The Arboretum. I am also available to lead tours of the Garden with a different perspective that may interest a different type of visitor that might not have come in the past.

KK: I can be part of the process to develop strategies to increase traffic into The Arboretum. My position affords the opportunity to have a direct effect on the overall appearance of the facility. I would like to upgrade the "look" of The Arboretum through creative plant selection and the development of "visual impact" areas on the Arboretum Grounds. I can assist in an aggressive effort to attract visitors through ideas such as reciprocal agreements with other facilities, interactive participation with schools and colleges, and increased educational offerings on site.

FM: When somebody calls The Arboretum with a plant problem or an identification of certain plants, I am the one they talk to. I am their first impression of the professionalism of The Arboretum staff. I make it a point to bend over backward to get them the information they need. I believe good, thorough, and thoughtful service will help create a solid and substantial word-of-mouth. I am also

formulating lectures and workshops that I hope will be informational and thought provoking. Plants are such an integral part of our society that adequately touching on their importance requires research in fields other than pure science. These disciplines need to be considered when trying to convey to people the

"I am their first impression of the professionalism of The Arboretum staff. I make it a point to bend over backward to get them the information they need."

— Frank McDonough

importance of plants in human affairs and also the key in creating exciting presentations to the visitor.

What specifically attracted you to The Arboretum, and what prompted you to accept your position at The Arboretum?

JT: The opportunity to spend more time on research rather than landscape maintenance was attractive to me. The Arboretum is open to the public more than other botanical institutions and is really here to help home gardeners. I have always enjoyed helping people with their garden problems and sharing my knowledge of horticulture. There is better opportunity here to educate the public on tree care, tree selection, disease control, and other horticultural topics.

KK: The job description is a veritable playground of activities for anyone truly involved in horticulture. The opportunity to participate in so many activities directly associated with the horticultural process, and to have an immediate impact

"The Arboretum is open to the public more than other botanical institutions and is really here to help home gardeners."

— Jerry Turney

on the long term appearance and the everyday machinations of The Arboretum is a challenge that I fully embrace.

FM: About two years ago I was visiting The Arboretum with my wife and daughter. We had a great time that day. We saw the "Anaconda" set and banged out tribal tunes by hitting sticks on dead canes in the bamboo forest across from the rose garden. We had a magical and unforgettable time. As we were strolling on our way out my wife turned to me and said, "Wouldn't it be nice if you worked here?" When the opportunity came to work here I could not refuse.

You have just been given \$1 million dollars to spend at The Arboretum. What would you do with it?

JT: Most of the research equipment that had been here at The Arboretum was removed when the research staff left in 1992. I would like to replace the equipment that was given away or sold and bring the sole remaining lab up to date. We need a boiler and autoclave to prepare media to culture fungi and bacteria, and camera ready microscope with high

quality optics for publication of quality photographs of plants and fungal tissues. I would also like to do DNA finger printing for fungi and plants. This procedure would require gel electrophoresis equipment such as an electrophoresis power source, a refrigerator, restriction enzymes and various lab supplies. The ability to characterize plants and fungi at the molecular level would greatly enhance our ability to identify unknown plants to cultivar and to population research on pathogenic fungi. I would also buy a research greenhouse that would have the ability to quarantine plants and separate research projects from one another. Finally, on my list of purchases would be a digital projector, slide scanner, and hardware to convert computer generated graphics to slide film. This equipment

"I would like to upgrade the "look" of The Arboretum through creative plant selection and the development of "visual impact" areas on the Arboretum Grounds."

— Kevin Kane

would greatly enhance our ability to present lectures and seminars on various topics.

KK: If I have that kind of money to spend immediately, I would upgrade the irrigation system, increase plant production facilities, and renovate planting areas most visible to the public entering The Arboretum grounds and facilities.

FM: I would build more interpretive displays. I believe the scientific aspects of plants can be highly entertaining and educational. I would also use the money to help bring in guest lecturers from both the scientific community and the media. 🌱

Turn Your Membership Benefits into Blossoms in Your Garden!

JUST IN TIME FOR FALL PLANTING
... all members of the Foundation receive a 10% discount at the following nurseries:

ALTADENA NURSERY

1968 N. Lake Avenue, Altadena

BURKARD NURSERIES, INC.

390 N. Orange Grove, Pasadena

DESERT TO JUNGLE NURSERY

3211 W. Beverly Blvd, Montebello

FOUR SEASON ORCHID

823 S. San Gabriel, San Gabriel

GARDEN VIEW NURSERY

12901 Lower Azusa Road, Irwindale

LAS TUNAS NURSERY

1155 E. Las Tunas Drive, San Gabriel

PLANT SYSTEM

2552 Hyperion Avenue, Silverlake

PRESENT PERFECT

140 S. Kinneloa Avenue, Pasadena

ROGER'S GARDENS

2301 San Joaquin Hills, Corona del Mar

SAN GABRIEL NURSERY

632 S. San Gabriel Blvd, San Gabriel

SMITH & HAWKEN

519 S. Lake, Pasadena

SOUTH PASADENA NURSERY

1507 El Centro, South Pasadena

STEWART ORCHIDS

3838 Sepulveda Blvd, Culver City

3376 Foothill Blvd, Carpentaria 🌱



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Gardens of the Silver Screen

Continued from front page

Doheny loved his indoor jungle. In fact when he was too ill to walk he insisted on being taken into the structure in his wheelchair. After his death the Chester Place property was donated to the Catholic Church and today it is the campus of Mount St. Mary's College. The conservatory no longer exists. The only thing that remains is a large pool that was located in the middle of the structure. 🌿

For your enjoyment, the following plants and trees in the above article can be found on the grounds at The Arboretum: Phoenix canareiensis and Cycads - The Tropical Forest • Orchids - The Tropical Greenhouse • Caryota and Trithrinax - Palm and Bamboo Section.

Visit the CAF Website at www.arboretum.org



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Plant Advice: (626) 821-3239

CAF Information Line: (626) 294-2059

*The Arboretum of Los Angeles County is jointly operated by
the California Arboretum Foundation and the County of Los Angeles.*

CAF EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Judith S. Morse

SUPERINTENDENT OF THE ARBORETUM

John Provine



Dated Material